

200TH SHAMEIVERSARY (ANNIVERSARY SHAM/E); REPATRIATION AND REPARATIONS ARE STILL THE ISSUE

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Osageyfo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah
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March 6, 2007 Ghana celebrated its 50th year of independence from colonial rule by the British Empire, proudly dubbed Ghana @ 50 Golden Jubilee; A time to remember, a time to commemorate the first Black Afrikan nation south of the Sahara to achieve such a feat. This was obviously an achievement of substance and credit to the entire Afrikan family at home and abroad that has struggled for generations for the liberation of Africa and Afrikan people, particularly for the Afrikans of the former Gold Coast under the leadership of Osageyfo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, first president of independent Ghana.

This was a commendable victory, pregnant with many challenges and opportunities. However, having said all of that, the obnoxious behavior of the British to try and steal part of this noble and glorious Afrikan achievement and usurp this Afrikan celebration by implanting the suggestion that their 200th year anniversary of the “legislative act” to outlaw the transport of captured and enslaved Afrikans across the North Atlantic Ocean, without freeing one enslaved Afrikan, is not worth a celebration by Afrikans.

On Sunday, March 25th at the Elmina Castle Dungeons forecourt and courtyard this diabolical plot by the British government via the British Council staged a well orchestrated attempt to convince the world that there is such a thing as British moral conscience with a program dubbed “Reflections”....This event was staged in the backdrop of the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency John Agyemon Kufuor, being invited on an official state visit to the UK with all the regal and diplomatic protocol extended just one week earlier. To the non-suspecting, already to forgive the “Whiteman” Afrikan psych, this may not seem offensive but to the conscious, mentally liberated Afrikan this is nothing less than a sham/shame to the dignity of our culture and history.

Once again Afrikans were being used as pawns in a chess game that we cannot win because the deck has been stacked against us as our leaders, the leaders of Afrikan people continue to be manipulated by the former colonial masters to the detriment of our people, “throwing dust into the eyes of the people”.

The program staged was just another example of the shameful exhibition of the myth of celebrating 200 years of the abolition of the slave trade. When in fact the slave trade did not end with the Wilberforce bill but continued unabated for more than twenty-seven years, until 1834; a slave trade that the British fully participated in, gained control of and profited from, and even until today continue

to profit from, while Afrikans are still expected to accept the crumbs from their tables which are laden with the spoils that they have stolen from Afrika.

The program included an array of renowned international and local artists and performers but these performances were overshadowed by the misguided statement/declaration of the president of Ghana who is also the chairman of the AU as he shocked the audience with his statements.

Sincere, from the soul compassion and understanding was sorely lacking as three adults, two of them Afrikan leaders, took to the stage and read statements which had been prepared in advance, lacked substance and sounded like they were reading for a group of Primary school students. To add insult to injury, president Kufuor topped it all off by blaming Afrikans for playing a “primary role” in the slave trade “because they were active in selling their kinsmen to strangers”. Doesn’t he realize that in any conflict you can find willing collaborators to participate in betraying their people? How does that equate to a “primary role”?

Was it Afrikans or Europeans who were responsible for the kidnap and imprisonment and exile to the Seychelles of the Ashante King Prempeh and King Aggrey of Cape Coast and King Kwabena Gyan of Elmina by the Dutch? Were these Afrikan leaders sitting at the table of reasoning during the Berlin Conference of 1884? No! At that conference a bunch of greedy, blood thirsty white men from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, England, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Turkey, Sweden-Norway, Austria-Hungary and the United States of America, came together to divide the continent of Afrika for themselves ushering in a heightened era of European imperialistic rape, slaughter, exploitation, human and ecological disruption and devastation moving the slave trade from capturing and enslaving individuals to enslaving a continent. How do the British justify celebrating 1807 as a moral act abolishing slavery (200th anniversary celebration), when in 1884 they were back at the table participating in the enslavement of an entire continent?

Was it not the Pope and the Catholic Church who blessed the Devil vessels which carried our kidnapped people away in chains, in hell holes of slave ships to an enduring hell of 500 years of inhuman chattel slavery? Once again, not Afrikan chiefs!

Mr. President how much more remorse do we need to show? We are already on our knees begging for what is rightfully due to Afrika...REPARATIONS for “repairing the damages” done.

Aren’t Britain and the rest of Europe, who were “active participants” in the Trans Atlantic Arab European Slave Trade continuing to enjoy today, the benefits, resources and economic vestiges derived from their raping, robbing and vicious exploitation of Afrikan people?

Then there was the Wilberforce Bill, and although it was alleged to be a powerful moral statement, it did not stop slavery, in fact the ban on slavery was totally ignored for an additional twenty-seven years after its passage. So what are we celebrating? America did not end slavery until 1865, the Portuguese and the Arabs not until the 19th century.

Baroness Amos during her very bland presentation also called for an end to racial discrimination and how do we do that...? Not by mere words. . . PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS, for “repairing the damages” done. And this can take many forms.

- ◆ Assisting Afrikans in the Diaspora who are interested in repatriating home to their Mother land, Afrika. PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.
- ◆ Clean up some of the mess that was left behind when the British finally left Afrika 50 years ago. i.e., disease infested, open gutters, reeking with putrid stench still line our streets. Why not a proper sewage system? Dirty and unsafe water trucked into our homes and

businesses for no water flows through the pipes. Where is the safe drinking water, why doesn't it flow through our pipes? PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.

- ◆ The upgrade and improvement of our health care system. PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.
- ◆ The upgrade and improvement of our educational system. PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.
- ◆ Decent living wages for the people. PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.
- ◆ Satisfaction of unpaid, impossible to re-pay debts to the IMF and World Bank. PAYMENT OF REPARATIONS.
- ◆ A system that provides for the physically challenged (handicapped), the homeless and the elderly.
- ◆ Advanced Science, Research and affordable Information Technology
- ◆ Affordable Alternative Energy Facilities
- ◆ And to repatriated Afrikans and those who will repatriate, the restoration of our Afrikan citizenship OR UNIVERSAL AFRIKAN CITIZENSHIP.

For President Kufuor to further state that the payment of reparations may prove difficult then he and others are not aware that reparations has been and continues to be paid to other ethnic groups whose suffering does not parallel Afrika's. For example, "little" Israel and the Jewish people, in a land that is not even theirs. If the same amount of money that is given to Israel each year (5 billion US Dollars) were to be given to each Afrikan country affected by the slave trade we would be much better off economically and socially. Instead we receive a fraction of what they receive, we receive "a little" aide, crumbs from the table of those who were the colonial masters in Afrika. What about "fair" trade for our very valuable resources. Additionally, the precedent has already been set for the payment of reparations. The following groups have been paid reparations and/or continue to receive:

1. 1980 – Klamath Indians of Oregon awarded \$81 million
2. 1985 – Chippewa Indians of Oregon awarded \$30 million
3. Seminoles of Florida awarded \$12,347,500 million
4. Sioux of So. Dakota \$1,105,000.00 million
5. 1986 Ottawa's of Michigan awarded \$32 million for 1835 Treaty
6. U.S. awards \$20,000.00 each to Japanese who were interned in concentration camps in 1942.
7. Jewish Holocaust survivors – who continue receiving reparations in the form of an acquired territorial homeland (Israel), 50 years plus of financial subsidy and assistance from the international community, of which the United States portion alone is 5 billion dollars a year along with unlimited military support for their national security. Also the German cash settlement of their reparations.
8. Australian Aborigines
9. Indigenous Alaskans

And the list goes on...but not Afrika, not even an apology from the British government. Only the watered down sentiment of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair that the slave trade was shameful, a deep sorrow and regret!

The regret should not only be Africa's enslavement, but the question burning to be answered is: How is it that after more than 100 years of colonialism and four hundred years of slavery that Africa finds itself in debt to the very people responsible for the current state of Africa's affairs? The truth is that Afrika is not a debtor to the developed world but creditors whose payment for the exploitation, theft of natural and human resources, and a myriad of other damages is long overdue; with no logical reason to be continuously begging and pleading for what is rightfully ours.



But this anniversary celebration was postured as a way of expressing Britain's regret for the role they played and the resultant suffering that was inflicted upon Afrikan people. What an insult to Afrikan people. How do you call the most horrific, dehumanizing and barbaric treatment of a people shameful? And they came with empty hands and emptier promises. They are mad people. Instead of celebrating with Britain, Afrikans should be mourning. This celebration of the 200th anniversary of Britain's abolition of the slave trade is mockery in the face of Afrikan people and no Afrikan should take part in it.

But there we were once again, singing and dancing, dancing on the graveyards of our ancestors who do not rest and will not rest until their souls and the souls and lives of their descendents are appeased.

As we (Afrikan ascendants) sat in the courtyard of the Elmina Castle Dungeons on Sunday, which had been painted pristine white inside and out, once again, many felt pain in the depth of their souls for the suffering of our ancestors, and for us. We felt betrayal as we watched Afrikan people "buck dancing" for the Colonial masters in the name of culture. Each crack of the whip, bit hot into our bodies as we watched and cringed at the re-enactment of the capture of enslaved Afrikans and abandoned by the people we seek to support our claim and represent our aspirations. Some people in the audience were even laughing...how sad. Are they singing and dancing in Auschwitz? Have those ovens been painted pretty pink? I don't think so! But they are receiving reparations for the Human Rights violations that they suffered at the hands of the Germans...what about Afrika?

When inquiring at the Press Conference from the organizers of this event, if this wasn't just another concert, we were told that this was a celebration; but a celebration of what?

For those of us who are ascendants (descendents) of enslaved Afrikans as a result of the Trans Atlantic Arab European Slave Trade, and whom have repatriated to the land of our ancestors; we can't even get the country who invited us, calls us family, brothers, sisters, kith and kin and calls itself the "Gateway to Afrika" to restore our Afrikan citizenship. They won't even grant us Dual Citizenship although it has been granted to Ghanaians who are resident in the lands of our birth, (Amerika, Britain etc.). Something is wrong with that picture.

And then there is the Joseph Project. "Diasporan Africans who have yearned for years to return to the motherland but have not been able to do so, can now have no more excuses to stay back. An innovative programme launched by the Ghanaian government called the Joseph Project, is all that they need to return home", according to Prince Dennis Klintings writer of the "Joseph Project Calling All Diasporan Africans" article which appeared in the March 2007 issue of the New African Magazine.

The article goes on to say that the "Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations has drawn up an elaborate plan to establish Ghana as the homeland for Africans in the Diaspora via the Joseph Project". "Its benefits are enormous, as it seeks to turn a painful past into a World Heritage Property and a **major tourism attraction**". So now our pain has become "World Heritage Property," as we are sold again and the dungeons, those hell holes that housed our ancient ancestors and their graveyards are now "**a major tourism attraction**".

When I and others initially inquired from the Minister of Tourism, if this Joseph Project wasn't just another tourism gimmick, we were assured that it was not. But I/we knew better. As the Joseph

Project is purported to be Ghana's invitation to Diasporan Africans to "return home" to the land of their ancestors, we must ask:

- ◆ "What of us who have already returned (Ababio)?"
- ◆ "What of the "Josephs" who left America and other parts of the Diaspora, some over forty – fifty years ago?"
- ◆ "What of the "Josephs" who are currently resident in Ghana, without the consideration of Dual citizenship?"

Even though Ghanaians, who are resident in America and other parts of the Diaspora have Dual Citizenship.

While Ghana through its various tourism programs continues to call us "brother, sister, family, royal" but continues to treat us like foreigners.

- ◆ How does "the Joseph projects aim to reconcile and unite African peoples so that their positive spirit and strengths would be released in a focused manner to help re-build Africa and the image of Africans worldwide" going to work, when the contributions of Africans from the Diaspora who have already repatriated are basically ignored?
- ◆ When children born to repatriated Afrikans in Ghana, do not take on the nationality of Ghana, the land of their birth but are classified as "foreigners".

We are ignored by everyone. During the 200th Anniversary celebration that was held in Elmina, not one repatriated Diasporan from America or England from our Elmina/Cape Coast community was invited to attend; In spite of the fact that we are a growing, self sustaining Diasporan community. Not invited by the British Council, the local Nananom, the District Assembly, the organizers of the event, the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations; no one invited us and we were once again non entities in Ghana's scheme of things (unless we are being used to promote tourism to the country).

The Minister of Tourism and Diasporan Relations, who visited Cape Coast and Elmina in the Central Region of Ghana was overheard to say that he was not even aware that Diasporan Africans were living and doing business here...and yet the Diaspora is part of his ministry; maybe we're not the Josephs that he speaking about! How sad!

In fact, up until several months ago, he even stated that we had Dual Citizenship, until that was clarified for him (we were told), by the Director of Immigrations.

The latest surge of Diasporans to the Central Region, have been repatriating with and without our families since 1990, we have built our businesses, our homes and are active members in our community. We have also built schools, clinics, restaurants, guest houses, hotels; we are scientists, university professors, writers, doctors, educators, religious leaders and the list goes on.

And what of our sacred monuments, those slave castle/dungeons that line the West Coast of Afrika? We are now being told that "thanks to the new spirit of reconciliation and the UNESCO institutionalization of the "castle and fort culture", the "doors of no return" has now become a new "Akwaaba" for the African Diaspora, the "Gates of return" into their second home, their real home, in Africa". All of this after the first "White Wash" of the Castle and Castle Dungeons, the chipping away of the Castle/Dungeon walls, the painting and turning of dungeons into gift shops, museums and the like; the renovation under the guise of preservation, which went on during the early 1990's. And now that we have "reconciled", (with no mention of the Diasporan Afrikans dis-satisfaction, protests, letter writings, etc.) the gift shops are now gone and the dungeons have been restored and the "White Wash of the Blackman's history continues unabated.

The Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations which has so many plans for 2007; fairs, exhibitions, Para sailing and festivals promoting Ghana as a tourism destination; PANAFEST, Emancipation Day and most recently, The Joseph Project are all slated, but JUNETEENTH, a Diasporan Afrikan observance, which celebrates the Last Day of Slavery and the First Day of Freedom for enslaved Afrikans in America, and has been celebrated for the past fourteen (14) years in Cape Coast and Elmina, at the request of the late Nana Osabarimba Kodwo Mbra V, Traditional Ruler of the Oguaa Traditional Area and is the forerunner to Emancipation, has consistently been ignored by the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations.

Are repatriated Afrikans from the Diaspora not the proverbial Joseph's that the Minister of Tourism speaks about????? We need clarity, for it is all so confusing.

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Nana Okofo Iture Kwaku Ababio I, the husband of Seestah IMAHKÜS, was killed in Accra, Ghana, West Africa on 3 July 2007. Please send our beloved seestah some love.